

DICHELIA HISTRIONANA* (FRÖLICH, 1828) (LEP: TORTRICIDAE) NEW TO THE BRITISH ISLES**¹ PHILIP H. STERLING AND ² MARCEL ASHBY¹ *Environmental Services, Dorset County Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ, U.K.*² *30a Alexandra Road, London N8Abstract**

The discovery of *Dichelia histrionana* (Frölich, 1828) (Lepidoptera: Tortricidae) new to the British Isles in Middlesex (VC21) is reported.

Introduction

On 8 June 2003, in his garden in Wood Green, London (Middlesex, VC 21), MA found a tortricid moth in his 125 watt mercury-vapour light-trap that he did not recognise. Being relatively new to recording microlepidoptera, MA fortunately sets a selection of specimens for subsequent identification, usually by Colin Plant. At a meeting of the Hertfordshire Moth Group early in 2004, at which PHS was giving a lecture on microlepidoptera, MA showed the tortricid to him, amongst a small number of other unidentified specimens. PHS did not immediately recognise the species, and thought it might be something unrecorded in this country. It was undoubtedly in the Tortricinae from its wing shape, but appeared to be too well marked and slightly brownish for a species of *Cnephasia*, and otherwise with wrong markings for *Syndemis musculana* (Hb.) or *Neosphaloptera nubilana* (Hb.). PHS dissected the specimen and it was then immediately obvious that it was *Dichelia histrionana* (Frölich), a species hitherto believed to be unrecorded in the British Isles. The adult and genitalia of both sexes are figured in Razowski (2002).

Recognition***Dichelia histrionana* (Frölich, 1828)**

Tortrix histrionana Frölich, 1828, *Enumeratio Tortr. Wurtemb.* 57. (Germany).

Description of imago

Based on the Middlesex specimen, a male (Plate B). Wingspan 16 mm. Head and frons whitish fuscous; antenna brown, weakly annulated dark fuscous; labial palpus whitish fuscous with scales tipped dark fuscous. Thorax fuscous with long hair-like scales extended over mesothorax, tegulae fuscous, posterior scales tipped whitish fuscous. Forewing with costal fold from base to one third, ground colour grey somewhat mixed fuscous with scattering of orange-brown scales, fasciae and other markings brownish black, indistinct narrow fasciae near base, at one quarter, and one third, a broad inward oblique fascia from costa at one half to tornus, interrupted about disc with distinct dot beyond, and a further oblique broad indistinct fascia from costa at three quarters to termen; cilia grey, broad cilia line darker. Hindwing grey, cilia pale grey, broad cilia line darker.

D. histrionana is a variable species. In paler specimens (Plate C) the brownish black fasciae and markings contrast strongly with the pale fuscous ground colour and the interruption of the broad fasciae is pronounced. In darker specimens the fasciae may be almost absent and sometimes the pattern uniformly mottled.



Plate B. *Dichelia histrionana* (Frölich, 1828); Wood Green, London (VC21), 8.vi.2003, M. Ashby



Plate C. *Dichelia histrionana* (Frölich, 1828); Brokared, Hallandslän, Sweden, 22.vi.1989, P.H. Sterling

Genitalia

The male genitalia of the London specimen are illustrated in Figure 1. They conform well to the drawing in Razowski (*op. cit.*). They are distinctive and quite unlike others of any species currently on the British list.

Taxonomic position

Dichelia histrionana is placed after members of the genus *Aphelia* and before those in *Clepsis* in Karsholt & Razowski (1996), coming directly after *A. viburnana* ([D. & S.]). However, in Bradley (2000), *Aphelia unitana* (Hübner) (1990) is the last in that genus, before *Clepsis*. It is therefore suggested that *D. histrionana* is given the number 990a in the Bradley list. According to Razowski (*op. cit.*) there are three species in the genus in the Western Palaearctic region, but only this one is found in Europe.

Comparison with similar species

Pale specimens of *D. histrionana* are quite striking and consequently unlikely to be overlooked amongst other members of the Tortricidae. However, darker specimens with less contrast in wing markings could be mistaken for dark forms of certain of the *Cnephasia*, perhaps *C. asseclana* ([D. & S.]) or *C. incertana* (Treits.), or otherwise mistaken for *N. nubilana* (Hb.), *S. musculana* (Hb.) or the dark greyish form of *Argyrotaenia ljugiana* (Thunb.). However, in all these other species the broad oblique fascia from the costa at about one half to the tornus is complete, whereas in *D. histrionana* it is interrupted about the disk by the paler ground colour of the forewing. In very dark specimens of *D. histrionana* without fasciae there is sometimes a distinct blackish mark towards the termen.

In addition, in male *D. histrionana* and *S. musculana* only, there are distinctive hair-like scales on the thorax. This was noted by Svensson (1990) and he suggested that both these species should be placed in the same genus under *Syndemis*, believing that this character indicated common ancestry.

Biology and phenology

A brief description of the larva and its feeding habits are given in Razowski (*op. cit.*). It feeds on fir trees *Abies*, and Norway spruce *Picea excelsa* [sic.] = *P. abies* (L.), overwintering whilst small inside a mined needle, and completing feeding in a spinning amongst needles in the early spring. The adult is found from the latter part of May to August. The London specimen was taken on the 8 June. The moth inhabits conifer forests.

Distribution

D. histrionana is found from France to Scandinavia and in central, southern and eastern Europe (Razowski, *op. cit.*). From the distribution given in Karsholt & Razowski, the species appears to be absent from the Iberian peninsula. The specimen in Plate C was taken by PHS in southern Sweden.

Comment

For a species so widespread in central Europe and one which feeds on conifer trees commonly planted in Britain, it is perhaps surprising that this is the first record of

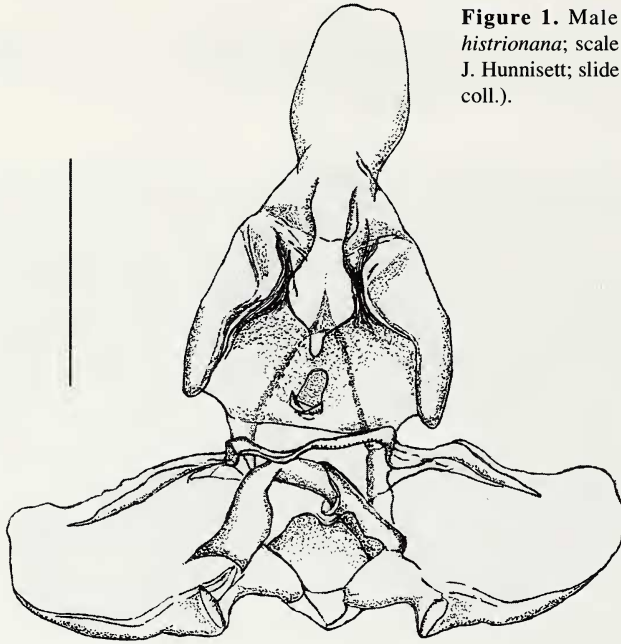


Figure 1. Male genitalia of *Dichelia histrionana*; scale bar = 1mm (drawing by J. Hunnisett; slide ref. PS875, P.H. Sterling coll.).

D. histrionana in the country. Since 2003 no further specimens have been found in MA's garden, nor does the species appear to have been found elsewhere. It is possible that the moth was accidentally imported to this country amongst nursery stock of conifer trees, or even timber, but it must surely be worth moth trapping and looking for larvae in conifer woodlands in Middlesex and probably elsewhere in eastern England and Scotland to establish if this species is resident.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to Mr John Hunnisett (Weymouth) for providing the genitalia drawing and would like to thank Peter Costen (Guernsey) for his help in sourcing references. We also acknowledge the helpful comments provided by our two anonymous referees.

References

- Bradley, J. D., 2000. *Checklist of Lepidoptera recorded from the British Isles*. Second edition (revised). Fordingbridge.
- Karsholt, O. & Razowski, J., (Eds), 1996. *The Lepidoptera of Europe. A distributional checklist*. Apollo, Stenstrup.
- Razowski, J., 2002. *Tortricidae (Lepidoptera) of Europe. Volume 1. Tortricinae and Chlidanotinae*. Slamka, Bratislava.
- Svensson, I., 1990. Remarkable records of Microlepidoptera in Sweden during 1989. *Entomologisk Tidskrift* **111**: 69-73.